

## **MINUTES**

### **MONTANA SENATE 57th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE AND SAFETY**

**Call to Order:** By **CHAIRMAN AL BISHOP**, on March 28, 2001 at 8:00 A.M., in Room 350 Capitol.

#### **ROLL CALL**

**Members Present:**

Sen. Al Bishop, Chairman (R)  
Sen. Duane Grimes, Vice Chairman (R)  
Sen. Chris Christiaens (D)  
Sen. Bob DePratu (R)  
Sen. Eve Franklin (D)  
Sen. Don Hargrove (R)  
Sen. Dan Harrington (D)  
Sen. Royal Johnson (R)  
Sen. Jerry O'Neil (R)  
Sen. Emily Stonington (D)

**Members Excused:** Sen. Fred Thomas (R)

**Members Absent:** None.

**Staff Present:** Jeanne Forrester, Committee Secretary  
Susan Fox, Legislative Branch

**Please Note:** These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

**Committee Business Summary:**

Hearing(s) & Date(s) Posted: HB 468, 3/27/2001; HB 38,  
3/27/2001  
Executive Action: HB 468; HB 38

#### **HEARING ON HB 468**

**Sponsor:** REP. KATHLEEN GALVIN-HALCRO, HD 48, Great Falls

**Proponents:** Jim Smith, Speech Therapy Association  
Sami Butler, Montana Nurses Association

**Jim Ahrens, Montana Hospital Association**

**Opponents:** None

**Opening Statement by Sponsor:**

**REP. KATHLEEN GALVIN-HALCRO, HD 48, Great Falls** introduced HB 468. She said this a bill that would provide for a universal newborn hearing screening program. She said an infant with a hearing impairment, who receives intervention by six months of age, will preform better in language development than an infant identified after this time. This bill would allow for the purchase of screening equipment.

**Proponents' Testimony:**

**Jim Smith, Speech Therapy Association** said members of his association were real excited to see this bill. Funding for this program will come from the State Special Revenue Account, which is funded from the Montana Telecommunications Access Program. Most hospitals in our urban areas have this equipment. This bill would help the children in the rural areas. He asked the committee to look favorably on this bill.

**Sami Butler, Montana Nurses Association** said early detection is a good thing. She said nurses have a strong commitment to prevention and prevention is cost effective. She asked the committee to support this bill.

**Jim Ahrens, Montana Hospital Association** said the large hospitals have been doing this for a couple of years. He said he believed the instrument that is needed for this test, would cost about \$5,000. He said this bill would be very helpful to fund some of the smaller hospitals.

**Opponents' Testimony:** None

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. EMILY STONINGTON** asked how familiar **Mr. Smith** was with the State Special Revenue Account. **Mr. Smith** said he believed the has a balance of \$500,000 to \$750,000, with an incoming stream of \$500,000. **REP. GALVIN-HALCRO** said the account presently has a balance of \$854,000.

**SEN. STONINGTON** asked what types of programs are funded by this account. **REP. GALVIN-HALCRO** said the fund has paid for the TTY

and TTD machines that are loaned on a permanent long term basis to anyone with a hearing impairment, who meets the criteria.

**SEN. STONINGTON** asked why she needed this bill. **REP. GALVIN-HALCRO** said the equipment she requested is different from equipment that is currently listed. The equipment that is currently provided for, is the equipment people use in their homes.

**SEN. STONINGTON** asked if this bill was expanding the purposes of this fund. **REP. GALVIN-HALCRO** said they were expanding the purposes of this fund this one time, in order to purchase this equipment. She added the purposes for this bill would stay in statute.

**SEN. DUANE GRIMES** asked if the hospitals or the baby doctors do this. **Mr. Ahrens** said if a baby is born in the hospital, the hospital does this. He said he does not know what happens if a child is not born in a hospital.

**SEN. GRIMES** asked if records are kept. **REP. GALVIN-HALCRO** said technicians do this in the hospital, records are kept and the information is sent to DPHHS.

**Closing by Sponsor:**

**REP. GALVIN-HALCRO** asked the committee to look favorably on HB 468. She said this would be a great asset to any child born in Montana.

**EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 468**

**Motion/Vote:** **SEN. DEPRATU** moved that **HB 468 BE CONCURRED IN.**  
**Motion carried 9-0. SENATORS CHRISTIAENS, HARGROVE, AND O'NEIL**  
voted by proxy.

**SENATOR FRANKLIN** will carry this bill in the Senate.

**HEARING ON HB 38**

**Sponsor:** **REP. TRUDI SCHMIDT, HD 42, GREAT FALLS**

**Proponents:** None

**Opponents:** None

**Informational Witness:** **Linda Curry, DPHHS**

**Opening Statement by Sponsor:**

**REP. TRUDI SCHMIDT, HD 42, GREAT FALLS** introduced HB 38. She said this is an act that would provide for the Department of Public Health and Human Service (DPHHS) to purchase surplus vehicles for participants in state programs funded by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). She said there are five regional offices in the state, and each office would get five cars.

**Proponents' Testimony:** None

**Opponents' Testimony:** None

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. GRIMES** asked who were the proponents, when the bill was heard in the house. **REP. SCHMIDT** said **SEN. DEPRATU, REP. MASOLO,** and the **Car Dealer Association** came to testify.

**SEN. GRIMES** asked what the loan rate would be. **Linda Curry, DPHHS,** said they currently have a program in Glendive. She said the program works with the local banks and uses the current bank rate. The vehicles are usually sold at one-half of the assessed value. She said they are not in competition with local banks and usually work out the rate with the entity.

***{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 0}***

**SEN. GRIMES** said he was concerned about people on welfare, who may feel by staying on welfare, they could get a better car than the one they have. **Ms. Curry** said they did a chart that showed families who work a part-time job are better off than the family who is on welfare. She said they will be working with TANF eligible families, who are up to 150 percent of poverty.

**SEN. GRIMES** said he felt better, knowing this would be a tool to help the working poor, rather than those only on subsistence.

**Ms. Fox** said this bill was drafted to allow for a wide range of people that would be eligible. A family would not have to be on assistance to participate, but could be in other state programs that are funded by TANF.

**SEN. GRIMES** asked what was the vote in the House on this bill.

**REP. SCHMIDT** said it passed 57-41.

**Closing by Sponsor:**

REP. SCHMIDT urged the committee to support this bill.

**EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HB 38**

**Motion:** SEN. HARRINGTON moved that HB 38 BE CONCURRED IN.

**Discussion:**

SEN. HARRINGTON said this is an important bill. He said by giving these people a reliable car, they will benefit and it will help them keep a job.

SEN. GRIMES said he was concerned that it was not an incentive to people who find jobs. He was also concerned these vehicles may not be the most reliable cars.

SEN. FRANKLIN said there were some requirements that the people taking part in this program must be currently employed; be actively working on becoming employed; or be employed within 30 days of receipt of the vehicle.

SEN. STONINGTON said she thought it was a good bill. She felt this program could help people in a poverty situation get credit and help them establish a credit base.

SEN. DEPRATU said in the real world, people in poverty get involved with businesses that loan them money for cars at a very high interest rate. They can end up owing several thousand dollars on a car only worth \$500.00 or less. He felt this is a good bill.

**Substitute Motion:** SEN. O'NEIL made a substitute motion TO AMEND HB 38, LINE 15, AFTER "APPROPRIATED FUNDS", ADD "FOR FUNDS DONATED FOR THAT PURPOSE."

SEN. GRIMES said in order to do this, we should talk to someone in accounting at DPHHS.

**Vote:** Motion to AMEND HB 38 failed 1-6 with O'Neil voting aye.

**Vote:** Motion that HB 38 BE CONCURRED IN carried 9-0. SENATOR HARGROVE voted by proxy.

SEN. DEPRATU will carry this bill in the Senate.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Adjournment: 9:05 A.M.

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SEN. AL BISHOP, Chairman

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JEANNE FORRESTER, Secretary

AB/JF

**EXHIBIT** (phs70aad)